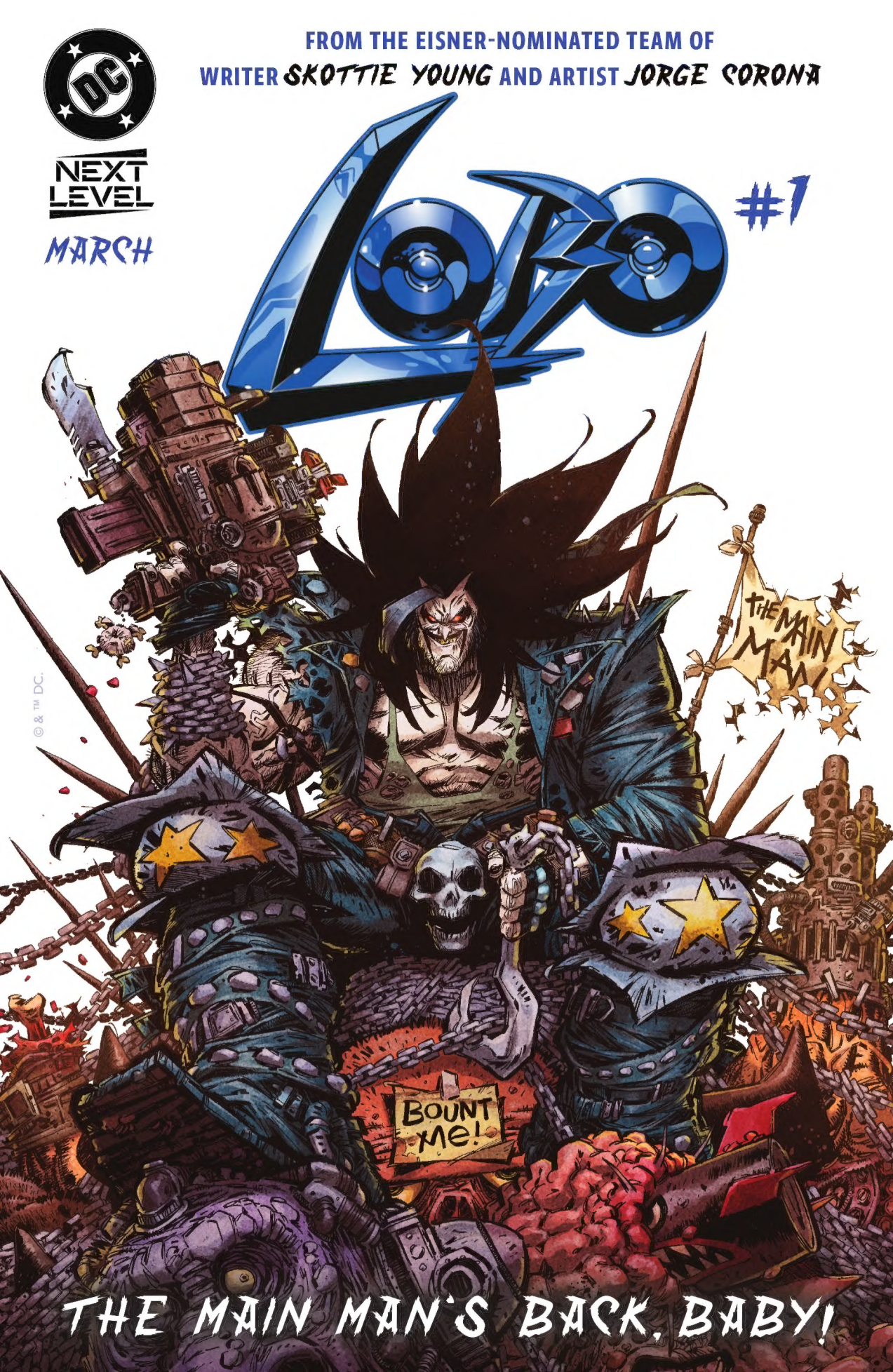
ABSOLUTE
BATMAN
DC
ALL IN
15+ TEEN+ 18
GOTHAM PD
GORDON
SNYDER
CANETE
MARTIN


FROM THE EISNER-NOMINATED TEAM OF
WRITER SKOTTIE YOUNG AND ARTIST JORGE CORONA
NEXT LEVEL
MARCH
LOBO
#1
THE MAIN MAN
BOUNT ME!
© & ™ DC.
THE MAIN MAN'S BACK, BABY!

OUTSIDE LINCOLN, NEW MEXICO.
BRUCE?
IT'S MOM, HONEY. I'M NOT SURE IF THIS MESSAGE WILL GO THROUGH, BUT I'M GOING TO BE OUT OF TOWN FOR A BIT. THERE ARE SOME...THINGS I NEED TO TAKE CARE OF.
JUST KNOW THAT YOU'LL ALWAYS BE MY LITTLE BOY AND I LOVE YOU AND DON'T YOU EVER CHANGE FOR ANYONE, YOU HEAR ME? THIS WORLD MIGHT--
BEEP
#%@&!
SKREE
"WE WATCH YOU AT YOUR HEARTH, WE WATCH YOU IN YOUR BED..."
"SPEAK NOT A WHISPERED WORD OF US..."
"OR WE'LL SEND THE TALON FOR YOUR HEA--"
MMPH!

# ABSOLUTE BATMAN

## THE SEVENTH KINGDOM – PART 2

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**ERIC CANETE**
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LETTERER

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VARIANT COVERS

**CARMINE DI GIANDOMENICO**
1:25 VARIANT COVER

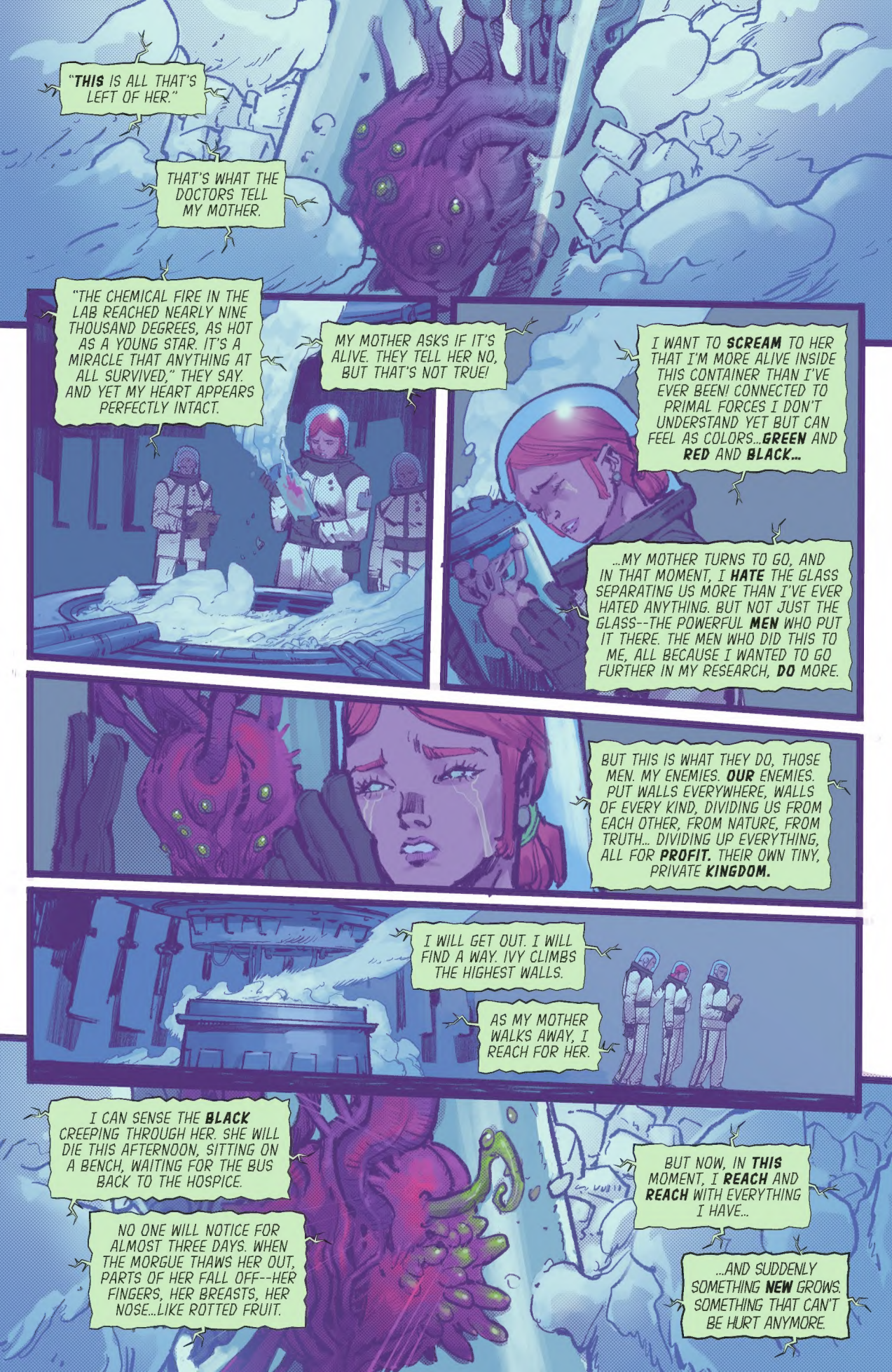
**SABRINA FUTCH**
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

**KATIE KUBERT**
EDITOR

**BATMAN** CREATED BY
**BOB KANE** WITH **BILL FINGER**

COME NOW, BATMAN. DON'T FIGHT.
THERE'S NO POINT.
KID, THE DENSITY OF THE SPORES UP THERE--ZZZZTTT--THAT COWL COMES OFF, YOU'LL HAVE MOMENTS BEFORE YOU'RE COMPROMISED! YOUR GENETICS WILL BE HERS TO SHAP--
THEN IT WON'T COME OFF!

NOW FIND ME A WEAKNESS!
RRRR
LOOK OUT! ON YOUR RIGHT!
FRRRR
ON YOUR LEFT!
SHUNK
SHUNK
SHUNK
AND ON YOUR RIGHT AND YOUR LEF--
RRRR
SHUNK
WEAKNESSES, PENNYWORTH! #$%& WEAKNESSES!
SHE'S MADE OF PLANT, ANIMAL, INSECT, BACTERIA--WHICH PART HAS A VULNERABILITY?
I'M LOOKING, KID, BUT IF THERE'S A SOFT SPOT TO HER, I'M NOT SEEING IT.


"THIS IS ALL THAT'S LEFT OF HER."
THAT'S WHAT THE DOCTORS TELL MY MOTHER.
"THE CHEMICAL FIRE IN THE LAB REACHED NEARLY NINE THOUSAND DEGREES, AS HOT AS A YOUNG STAR. IT'S A MIRACLE THAT ANYTHING AT ALL SURVIVED," THEY SAY. AND YET MY HEART APPEARS PERFECTLY INTACT.
MY MOTHER ASKS IF IT'S ALIVE. THEY TELL HER NO, BUT THAT'S NOT TRUE!
I WANT TO SCREAM TO HER THAT I'M MORE ALIVE INSIDE THIS CONTAINER THAN I'VE EVER BEEN! CONNECTED TO PRIMAL FORCES I DON'T UNDERSTAND YET BUT CAN FEEL AS COLORS...GREEN AND RED AND BLACK...
...MY MOTHER TURNS TO GO, AND IN THAT MOMENT, I HATE THE GLASS SEPARATING US MORE THAN I'VE EVER HATED ANYTHING. BUT NOT JUST THE GLASS--THE POWERFUL MEN WHO PUT IT THERE. THE MEN WHO DID THIS TO ME, ALL BECAUSE I WANTED TO GO FURTHER IN MY RESEARCH, DO MORE.
BUT THIS IS WHAT THEY DO, THOSE MEN. MY ENEMIES. OUR ENEMIES. PUT WALLS EVERYWHERE, WALLS OF EVERY KIND, DIVIDING US FROM EACH OTHER, FROM NATURE, FROM TRUTH... DIVIDING UP EVERYTHING, ALL FOR PROFIT. THEIR OWN TINY, PRIVATE KINGDOM.
I WILL GET OUT. I WILL FIND A WAY. IVY CLIMBS THE HIGHEST WALLS.
AS MY MOTHER WALKS AWAY, I REACH FOR HER.
I CAN SENSE THE BLACK CREEPING THROUGH HER. SHE WILL DIE THIS AFTERNOON, SITTING ON A BENCH, WAITING FOR THE BUS BACK TO THE HOSPICE.
NO ONE WILL NOTICE FOR ALMOST THREE DAYS. WHEN THE MORGUE THAWS HER OUT, PARTS OF HER FALL OFF--HER FINGERS, HER BREASTS, HER NOSE...LIKE ROTTED FRUIT.
BUT NOW, IN THIS MOMENT, I REACH AND REACH WITH EVERYTHING I HAVE...
...AND SUDDENLY SOMETHING NEW GROWS. SOMETHING THAT CAN'T BE HURT ANYMORE.

WHY ARE YOU FIGHTING ME, BATMAN? WE'RE ON THE SAME SIDE.
PENNYWORTH!
HE'S NOT HERE ANYMORE, I'M AFRAID. RARE FORMS OF BACTERIA CAN DISRUPT RADIO SIGNALS. AS CAN SOME BIRD CALLS...AND EVEN DOLPHIN SONGS...ALL OF WHICH I'M EMITTING AS WE SPEAK. NO "WEAKNESSES." JUST ***STRENGTHS.***
YOU CAN BE SO MUCH MORE, TOO. YOU'RE HALFWAY THERE. YOU JUST NEED TO EMBRACE IT!

I'M HERE, WAYLON!
Don't, Bruce. Don't accept it. Don't let yourself go there.
That sound? The roar you keep hearing, echoing from deep in the tunnels... it's him changing back. Not becoming... something worse...
ICEBERG LOUNGE
I'M GOING TO KEEP BANGING ON YOUR DOOR, OZZIE-- UNH!--EVERY DAY UNTIL YOU TALK TO ME!
...AND THE MORE I AM GIVEN, THE LESS I AM WORTH. COME ON. WHAT AM I? EDDIE, PLEASE...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, "PUT ON LEAVE"?
LOOK, ALL I HEARD IS, HANGING OUT WITH THE BATMAN HAS THEM LOOKING AT DENT DIFFERENTLY. AND... ALL THE FOLKS HE PUT AWAY, TOO.
LAW OFFICE
I got a message from Mom yesterday.
I keep opening it, then hanging up before it starts.
Deep down I know I'm just saving it.
For when I need to hear it most.
What's #$%G happening to me?

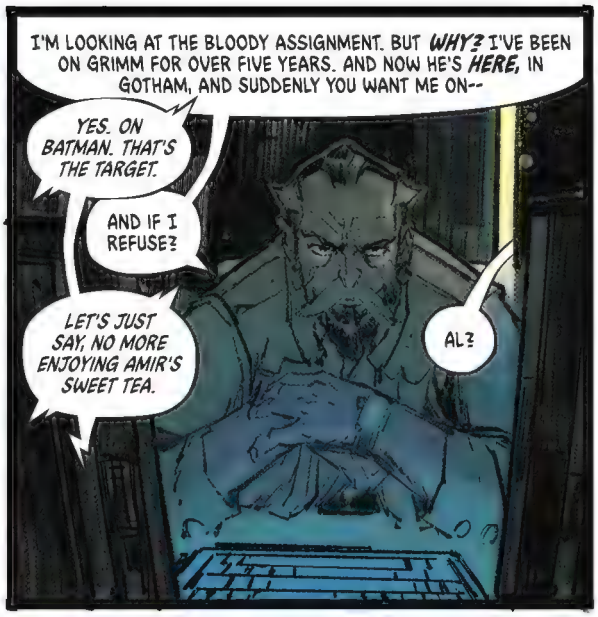
I'LL TAKE IT ALL AWAY, BATMAN. THAT SOFT PART, THAT PAIN.
WE'RE BECOMING ONE, YOU AND ME... I CAN FEEL HOW MUCH YOU'RE HURTING. YOUR MOTHER. YOUR FRIENDS...
GET OUT OF MY HEAD!
SPLORP
SPLORP
NO...JOIN ME. BE MY KNIGHT. TOGETHER WE CAN BEAT THEM.

LOOK AT YOU. **SPINES** THAT STAB LIKE A CHOLLA CACTUS. **WINGS** THAT SLASH LIKE AN OSTRICH. THE WILL OF A VIRUS. JUST BREATHE ME IN.
POOM
POOM
PTW!!
HA. AND THE STUBBORNNESS OF A COCKROACH... ALL RIGHT, THEN. I'LL DRAG YOU INTO THE ***LIGHT,*** ONE WAY OR ANOTHER.

SWISH
GASP!
YOU KNEW THE RULES ABOUT COMMUNICATION. AND THE CONSEQUENCES FOR BREAKING THEM.
SO WHY, MARTHA?
BECAUSE SOMETHING IS HAPPENING IN GOTHAM RIGHT NOW. SOMETHING THAT I BELIEVED WAS WORTH THE RISK.
THAT'S NOT YOUR DECISION TO MAKE. YOU PUT US ALL IN DANGER BY REACHING OUT.
WHAT GIVES YOU THE RIGHT? THIS IS HOW WE'VE SURVIVED. JUST BECAUSE YOU WERE ONE OF US--
I WASN'T JUST ONE OF YOU. I WAS A TALON. THE BEST TALON. YOU ALL KNOW WHAT I DID FOR THE COURT. THAT'S WHAT GIVES ME THE #$%& RIGHT.
AND MAYBE "SURVIVING" WAS ENOUGH BEFORE, BUT THE TRUTH IS, BATMAN CHANGED THAT.
THEN YOU CAN BLAME BATMAN FOR WHAT'S ABOUT TO HAPPEN.

THIS CITY IS AN ECOSYSTEM, A LIVING THING. YOU INTRODUCED SOMETHING NEW, SOMETHING FOREIGN, AND NOW THE CITY IS REACTING
BUT INSTEAD OF GOING FURTHER, YOU TRY TO HOLD IT BACK. EVEN NOW. LOOKING FOR THAT **WEAPON.** THE SCREAMING GUN BEHIND YOU...LIKE THE ONES THEY USE IN THAT **PLACE** TO SEPARATE MY CELLS...
STOP DENYING WHAT YOU WANT!
AAAGH!
YOU **WISHED** TO RESHAPE THINGS, JUST LIKE I DID. YOU BLEW THE SEEDS ACROSS THE CITY. BUT NOW YOU'RE AFRAID OF WHAT YOU'VE SOWN. WELL, **CHANGE** IS COMING, **WHETHER YOU LIKE IT OR NOT!**

"THERE'S BEEN A SHIFT IN PLANS, AGENT PENNYWORTH. YOUR NEW ASSIGNMENT--"


I'M LOOKING AT THE BLOODY ASSIGNMENT. BUT WHY? I'VE BEEN ON GRIMM FOR OVER FIVE YEARS. AND NOW HE'S HERE, IN GOTHAM, AND SUDDENLY YOU WANT ME ON--
YES. ON BATMAN. THAT'S THE TARGET.
AND IF I REFUSE?
LET'S JUST SAY, NO MORE ENJOYING AMIR'S SWEET TEA.
AL?

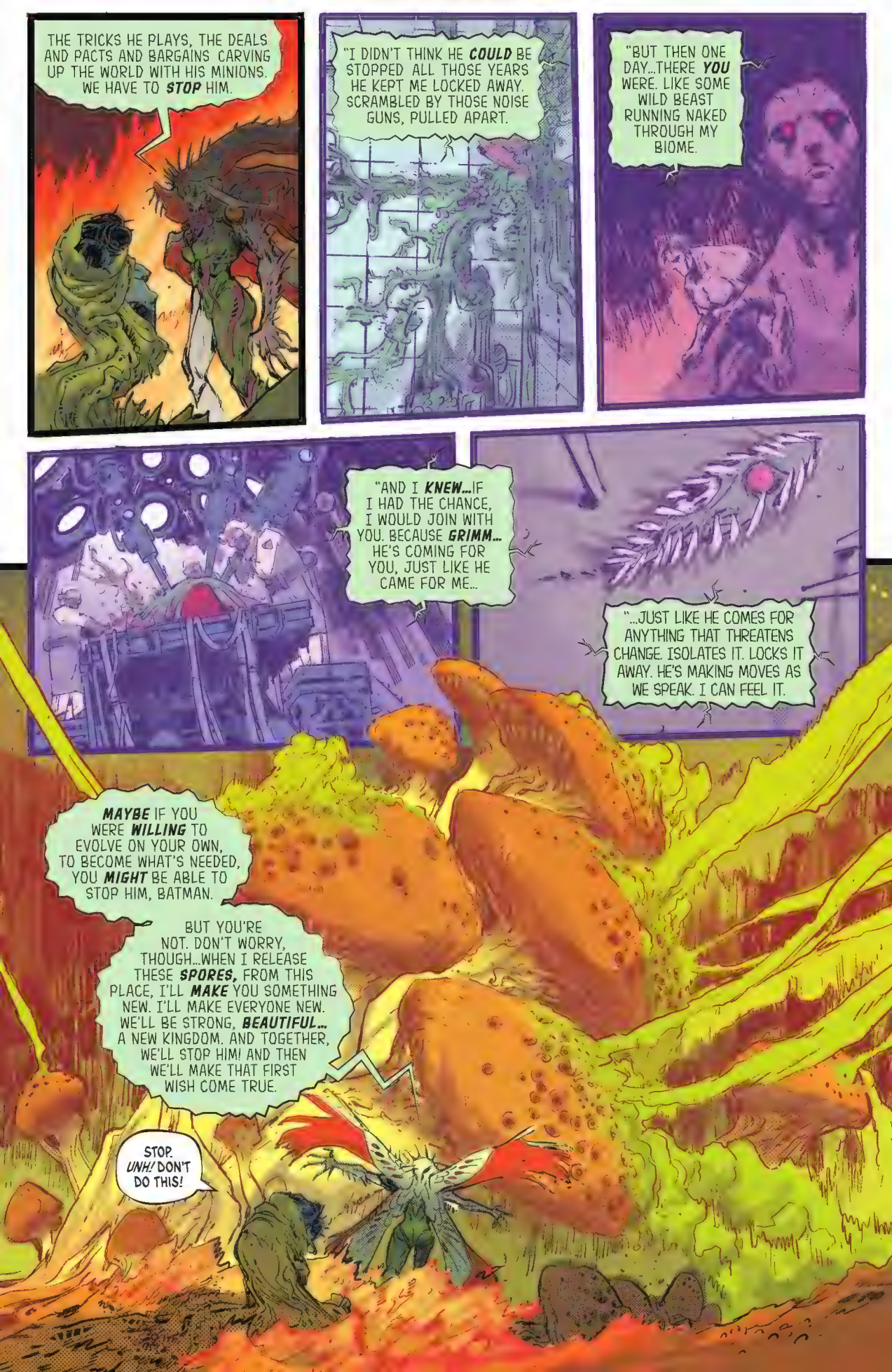
MISS QUINN? HOW...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
I'M HERE TO HELP. WITH THIS WHOLE "BATMAN THING."

WE ALL ARE.

ALL RIGHT, DICK. TOMORROW YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT HIM.

AW, COME ON, BRUCE. WE'RE TRYING THAT NEW BATMAN-THEMED BAR ON 39TH. COME ON!
GREAT BIG WINGS.
I smile, tell them another time. I hope they can't see my fists shaking. I look at the sidewalk. They're two hundred years old...

"YOU CAN WALK AROUND WITH YOUR HEAD DOWN, BLIND TO IT, WRITING IN YOUR LITTLE BOOK, BUT IT'S **HAPPENING.**
"AND **THEY** SEE IT, BELIEVE ME. THE ONES WHOSE PLANS YOU DISRUPTED. THE ONES WHO **HATE** CHANGE
"THE **WORST** OF THEM IS HERE.
"THEIR LEADER, THEIR HORNED **KING.** LOOKING DOWN AND SMILING FROM SOMEWHERE HIGH ABOVE US BOTH."
It's still Gotham, dammit.
Steel.
Limestone.


THE TRICKS HE PLAYS, THE DEALS AND PACTS AND BARGAINS CARVING UP THE WORLD WITH HIS MINIONS. WE HAVE TO STOP HIM.
"I DIDN'T THINK HE COULD BE STOPPED ALL THOSE YEARS HE KEPT ME LOCKED AWAY. SCRAMBLED BY THOSE NOISE GUNS, PULLED APART.
"BUT THEN ONE DAY...THERE YOU WERE. LIKE SOME WILD BEAST RUNNING NAKED THROUGH MY BIOME.
"AND I KNEW...IF I HAD THE CHANCE, I WOULD JOIN WITH YOU. BECAUSE GRIMM... HE'S COMING FOR YOU, JUST LIKE HE CAME FOR ME...
"...JUST LIKE HE COMES FOR ANYTHING THAT THREATENS CHANGE. ISOLATES IT. LOCKS IT AWAY. HE'S MAKING MOVES AS WE SPEAK. I CAN FEEL IT.
MAYBE IF YOU WERE WILLING TO EVOLVE ON YOUR OWN, TO BECOME WHAT'S NEEDED, YOU MIGHT BE ABLE TO STOP HIM, BATMAN.
BUT YOU'RE NOT. DON'T WORRY, THOUGH...WHEN I RELEASE THESE SPORES, FROM THIS PLACE, I'LL MAKE YOU SOMETHING NEW. I'LL MAKE EVERYONE NEW. WE'LL BE STRONG, BEAUTIFUL... A NEW KINGDOM. AND TOGETHER, WE'LL STOP HIM! AND THEN WE'LL MAKE THAT FIRST WISH COME TRUE.
STOP. UNH! DON'T DO THIS!

YOU HEARD ME, @#$%&, I SAID--
BRUCE! CALM DOWN.
MR. GORDON? WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?
I NEED TO TALK TO YOU.
NO OFFENSE, BUT THE LAST THING I WANT TO TALK ABOUT IS YOU AND MY MOM.
IT'S NOT ABOUT YOUR MOM.
SHE'S A GROWN WOMAN, I'M A GROWN MAN, AND NATURE IS NATURE. BUT THIS IS ABOUT YOU, SON.
"ME"?
BRUCE, I KNOW.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? KNOW WHAT?
OH.
WANT TO SIT?
...
OKAY.

HOW DID YOU...
SON, SIX FOOT NINE AND FOUR HUNDRED POUNDS DOESN'T EXACTLY BLEND IN. AND I DID PULL YOU OUT FROM A PILE OF BATS ONE TIME.
DOES MY MOM KNOW?
BELIEVE IT OR NOT, I DON'T THINK SO. HER BRAIN'S ENGAGED IN SOME OLYMPIC-LEVEL GYMNASTICS TO AVOID THE OBVIOUS. SELF-DEFENSE, I SUPPOSE.
ARE YOU HERE TO TELL ME TO STOP?
DO YOU WANT ME TO?
RIGHT NOW? I DON'T KNOW. HE'S JUST GETTING... SO BIG, MR. GORDON. I WANTED BATMAN TO AFFECT THE CITY, TO SHINE A LIGHT ON THINGS, BUT I DIDN'T...
EXPECT HIM TO BECOME THE LIGHT HIMSELF? THE BIG OLD BEACON IN THE SKY.
THE THINGS I'M UP AGAINST, TOO. IT FEELS LIKE TO WIN, I HAVE TO BECOME SOMETHING TOUGHER, MEANER...SOMETHING--
DARKER?
YEAH.
ANY ADVICE?
FROM ME? NOPE. NO WAY. I'M JUST AN OLD MAN IN LOVE WITH YOUR MOM, SON.
BUT...I'LL GIVE YOU THE ADVICE SOMEONE ELSE GAVE ME WHEN I WAS IN A SIMILAR SITUATION TO YOURS. SOMEONE MUCH SMARTER THAN ME...

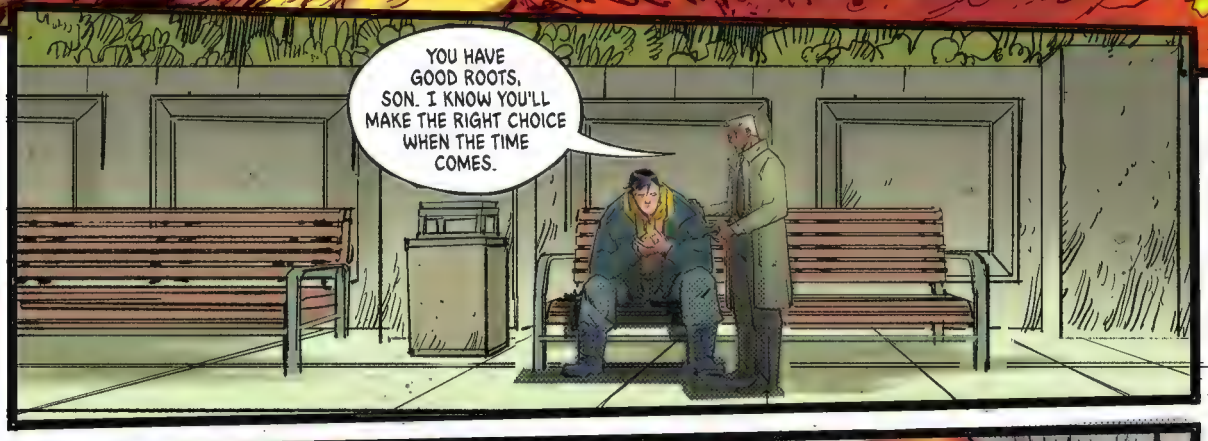
"...MY DAUGHTER."
NNNGH!
SSSHHH! SHE'LL HEAR YOU. STOP STRUGGLING. I GOT YOU.
OFFICER GORDON...?
YOU CAN THANK ME BY SWEARING NEVER TO PULL THAT KIND OF @#$%& AGAIN. NOW, S.W.A.T. IS ABOUT TO BUST IN WITH A DOZEN DOUBLE-AUGIED-UP M.U.C.S, SO WE NEED TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE SHE FIGURES OUT YOU'RE--
NO.
THE SPORES. SHE'S GOING TO RELEASE THEM ACROSS THE CITY.
WE HAVE TO DESTROY THEM. I HAVE THE M.U.C. BUT DO YOU HAVE ANY EXPLOSIVES?
NO. BUT TWO FLIGHTS DOWN, I SAW--
THERE'S NO TIME. BUT IF WE CAN--
IF YOU CAN DO WHAT? WHAT CAN YOU POSSIBLY DO?
AND HERE I THOUGHT WE COULD BE ALLIES. BUT I WAS WRONG

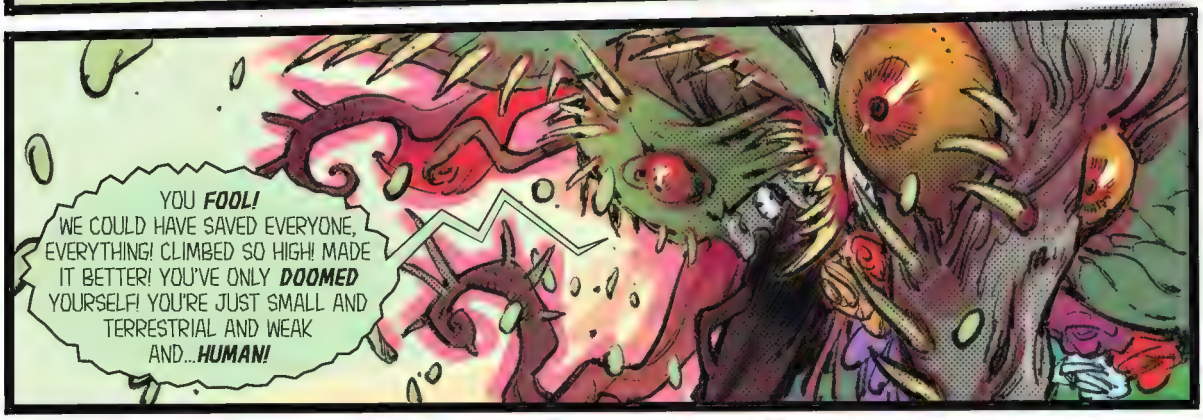
I'M SORRY, MARTHA. WE REALLY HOPED YOU'D LISTEN TO REASON.
I'M HAPPY TO DISAPPOINT YOU, THEN. BECAUSE I ALWAYS BELIEVED WE OWLS WERE NEVER SUPPOSED TO LISTEN TO REASON.
THAT'S ENOUGH.
NTO RICO
NO. IT'S NOT. WE STOOD FOR SOMETHING, ONCE. REMEMBER? WE WERE THE ONES WHO FOUGHT BACK FROM THE SHADOWS AGAINST THE RICH AND POWERFUL.
WE WERE WARRIORS, FIGHTING FOR A BETTER WORLD. PROUD, WISE, VICIOUS. OWLS.
AND YES, THEY CRUSHED US. HE CRUSHED US. SO NOW MAYBE WE NEED TO BE SOMETHING NEW, BUT NOT BY HIDING OR BY CHANGING WHO WE ARE AT OUR CORE. IF THAT'S WHAT WE'RE ABOUT...
...YOU MIGHT AS WELL PULL THE TRIGGER.

SKREEE!
BWAAA

WHAT WAS BARBARA'S ADVICE?
WHEN I BECAME MAYOR, I WAS TERRIFIED, BRUCE. I'D HAD *MY* PLAN, *MY* AGENDA, BUT SUDDENLY THE WHOLE CITY WAS LOOKING TO ME TO DO SO MUCH MORE. TO *BE* MORE. AND THE CRITICS, THEY KEPT ATTACKING ME FOR BEING TOO SOFT, TOO LOCAL, TOO MUCH OF A PEOPLE PERSON.
I WAS ALL TORN UP. MAYBE TO BE A GOOD MAYOR I HAD TO FORGET ALL THE HIPPIE-DIPPIE STUFF YOUR DAD AND MOM AND I LOVED AND BECOME SOMETHING TOUGHER, COLDER, MEANER.
ONE NIGHT, BABS, SHE WAS SIXTEEN AT THE TIME, STUDYING FOR A BIOLOGY TEST. SHE FOUND ME ON THE BALCONY IN MY ROBE...STARING OUT AT THE CITY. AND SHE SAID SOMETHING TO ME.
IVY DOES CLIMB. BUT IT ALSO *CLINGS*. IT HOLDS ON, DR. ISLEY. YOU DON'T WANT TO LOSE THAT LAST PIECE OF YOURSELF, DO YOU?
WE ARE BETTER THAN THIS!
SHE SAID, "DAD, A TREE GROWS TALLEST WHEN YOU CARE FOR ITS ROOTS."
WE'RE IN!
DESTROY THE SPORES, DR. ISLEY. NOW!
ALL RIGHT!

BOOM
BOOM
BOOM


YOU HAVE GOOD ROOTS, SON. I KNOW YOU'LL MAKE THE RIGHT CHOICE WHEN THE TIME COMES.


YOU *FOOL!* WE COULD HAVE SAVED EVERYONE, EVERYTHING! CLIMBED SO HIGH! MADE IT BETTER! YOU'VE ONLY *DOOMED* YOURSELF! YOU'RE JUST SMALL AND TERRESTRIAL AND WEAK AND...*HUMAN!*

YES, I HAVE BEEN.
BUT NOT ANYMORE.

WHAT ARE YOU--
SQUELCH
NO! MY HEART!
BLAM
S.W.A.T. IS HERE! THIS WAY!

I'LL KILL YOU, BATMAN! YOU MONSTER!
BATMAN...WHAT HAPPENED BACK THERE...YOU DESTROYED HER HEART ANYWAY...BATMAN?
YOU KNOW, MAYBE YOU SHOULD TAKE THIS BACK...?
SHE SAID TO FIGHT WHAT'S COMING, I NEEDED TO EVOLVE.
I JUST TOOK HER ADVICE.
MAYBE WE ALL SHOULD.

KNOCK KNOCK
BRUCE! HOW MANY TIMES DO I HAVE TO HAVE YOUR #$%#& ASS KICKED BEFORE YOU REALIZE I DON'T WANT TO BE YOUR FR--
OH.
DON'T KICK *MY* ASS, MAN. I'M JUST A DELIVERY GUY.
tap-tap-tap
LAW
*COUGH* HELLO?!
BRUCE, ARE YOU HERE? *BRUCE?!*

BRUCE?
IT'S MOM, HONEY. I'M--
DELETE MESSAGE.

THE WONDER WAR BEGINS IN
WONDER WOMAN
#31
ALL HAIL THE MATRIARCH
Written by
TOM KING
Art by
DANIEL SAMPERE
ON SALE IN MARCH
ALL IN
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DC NATION SPOTLIGHT ON ALL IN

# THE MATRIARCH

## INTERVIEW WITH TOM KING

The Matriarch has arrived in the pages of *Wonder Woman*, and she's here to change everything. Superstar writer Tom King reveals Diana's most ambitious villain yet, a royal force of nature with power to topple gods and heroes alike. As "The Wonder War" begins, this future-born conqueror promises an epic showdown that will redefine the Amazing Amazon's legacy.

**What can you tell us about the creation of the Matriarch?**

From the beginning my brilliant artist, Daniel Sampere, and I wanted to create a huge *Wonder Woman* villain that would be the focus of our arc. We very cleverly put her origin story on the very first page of the series, and nobody noticed, which was fun! We took 25 issues of story leading up to the launch of this character who is the pivotal villain of the whole series, and her name is the Matriarch.

**Can you share a bit about the character's design?**

Daniel's design is perfect. I wanted her to look like an evil princess, or to have that sort of royalty to her. This look of "I've inherited the world and I can do anything."

Art by Daniel Sampere

**How do you craft a villain worthy of Wonder Woman's legacy?**

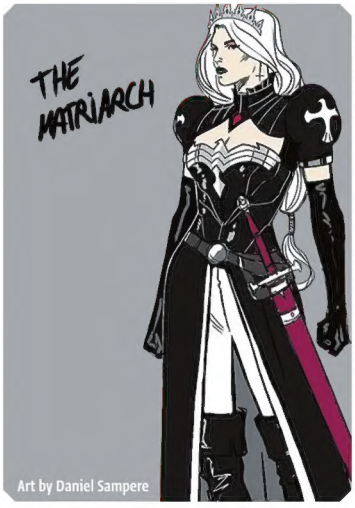
It's my chance to do a Lex Luthor. My chance to do a Joker. That's who the Matriarch is. People who are reading *Wonder Woman* today need an experience as big as the people who were reading *Batman* in the '30s or '40s. They deserve huge comics that aren't just looking backward, but looking forward.

Art by Jorge Fornés

What you started to see in issue #25, the big launch of this character, is she exists in the future. I was sort of inspired by the comics of my youth, where the great villains came from the future. In the future, she has left Themyscira, has conquered Earth, and has killed the Justice League. When you see each of their deaths, their last words to the Matriarch before they succumb to her total power are "Wonder Woman," who's the last hope against this villain.

**What can fans expect as we head toward "The Wonder War"?**

There's a lot more to come. We've been building on this. We created this character called the Sovereign, who may or may not be her father. You see her birth and the birth of Trinity around the same time. These two babies who start together becoming the greatest of adversaries in the future will be the driving force behind the comic. I couldn't be more excited for where this is going.




Art by Daniel Sampere

**DON'T MISS THE EPIC START OF "THE WONDER WAR" IN *WONDER WOMAN* #31, ON SALE IN MARCH!**

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